

Chapter VII: Glossary and Acronyms

Glossary of Terms

Affected environment: Existing natural, cultural, and social conditions of an area that are subject to change, both directly and indirectly, as a result of a proposed human action.

Alternatives: Sets of management elements that represent a range of options for how, or whether to proceed with a proposed project. An environmental assessment analyzes the potential environmental and social impacts of the range of alternatives presented, as required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Annosus root disease (Root Rot): Annosus root disease is a widespread native fungus. In pines, the fungus spreads through the root system, attacking and killing the inner bark and sapwood. Within two to six years after initial infection, the fungus reaches the root crown and girdles the tree. The tree dies, but the fungus remains active as a saprophytic wood-decaying organism within roots and the butt of the dead tree. Pines weakened by annosus root disease are often killed by bark beetles. Incense-cedars, however, are not affected by beetles and will stand green for many years, until the disease finally weakens the structure enough to cause failure. Cedars are thought to act as a reservoir for annosus root disease because they take so long to die.

Archeological resources: Historic and prehistoric deposits, sites, features, structure ruins, and anything of a cultural nature found within, or removed from, an archeological site.

Asphalt pulverizing: Pulverizing is the process of breaking apart existing roadway asphalt into an aggregate (similar to creating mulch from a tree), sometimes blending the recycled aggregate with new aggregate, and reusing it as subgrade for newly laid asphalt. Pulverizing is a cost effective and environmentally friendly way to reconstruct existing pavement. This process eliminates the expensive and environmentally damaging excavation and trucking of the existing asphalt, and it creates a stronger base.

Barrier stones: Naturally shaped granite boulders placed along roadway and/or roadside parking locations (either partially buried or fully exposed) to define an area or make an area inaccessible.

Bed and bank: The area below the ordinary high water mark in a river or stream. The ordinary high water mark is defined as the 2.33-year flood by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Berm: Mound of shaped earth intended to direct traffic away from roadway shoulders or to channel hydrologic processes.

Best Management Practices (BMPs): Effective, feasible (including technological, economic, and institutional considerations) conservation practices and land- and water-management measures that avoid or minimize adverse impacts to natural and cultural resources. BMPs may include schedules for activities, prohibitions, maintenance guidelines, and other management practices.

CEQ Regulations: The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) was established by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and given the responsibility for developing federal environmental policy and overseeing the implementation of NEPA by federal agencies.

Cultural Resources: Properties such as landscapes or districts, archeological sites, historic properties, buildings, structures, objects, or traditional cultural resources, that are usually greater than 50 years of age and possess architectural, historic, scientific, or other technical value. By their nature, cultural resources are non-renewable.

Curbing: Reinforced concrete and/or rectangular cut granite placed at selected roadside parking locations and/or along roadway shoulder.

Decibel (dBA): A unit of measure of sound intensity.

Dry laid: Method of stone masonry in which rock structures are constructed without the use of mortar.

Drop inlet: A drop inlet is a mechanical system which lowers water through a box or pipe structure. This system internally dissipates most of the energy produced by the water.

Ecological restoration: Ecological restoration is the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed.

Ecosystem: An ecosystem can be defined as a geographically identifiable area that encompasses unique physical and biological characteristics. It is the sum of the plant community, animal community, and environment in a particular region or habitat.

Emergent wetland: A wetland characterized by frequent or continual inundation dominated by herbaceous species of plants typically rooted underwater and emerging into air (e.g., cattails, rushes), excluding mosses and lichens. This vegetation is present for most of the growing season in most years. Perennial plants usually dominate these wetlands. All water regimes are included, except sub-tidal and irregularly exposed.

End section: End sections are structures attached to the ends of culverts to control debris and water flow entering and exiting the pipe.

Energy dissipaters: A structure at a culvert outlet designed to dissipate the energy of water flow and direct the water to its natural channel.

Environmental Assessment: A public document required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) that identifies and analyzes activities that might affect the human and natural environment. An environmental assessment is a concise public document which provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), aids an agency's compliance with NEPA when no EIS is necessary, and it facilitates preparation of an EIS when one is necessary.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): A public document required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) that identifies and analyzes activities that might affect the human and natural environment.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative: The environmentally preferable alternative is the alternative within the range of alternatives presented in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement that best promotes the goals of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In general, this is the alternative causes the least damage to the environment and best protects natural and cultural

resources. In practice, one alternative may be more preferable for some environmental resources while another alternative may be preferable for other resources.

Facilities: Buildings and the associated supporting infrastructure such as roads, trails, and utilities.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI): The public document describing the decision made on selecting the “preferred alternative” in an environmental assessment. See “environmental assessment.”

Floodplain: A nearly level alluvial plain that borders a river or stream and is subject to flooding unless protected artificially.

Governing mandates: The National Park Service is directed to address user capacity, resource protection, and public enjoyment of park resources through a number of pieces of legislation such as laws, regulations, policies, and programs. These mandates establish the authority and responsibility for management in Yosemite National Park.

Headwall: A headwall is a supporting structure constructed at the end of a drainage structure such as a culvert.

Implementation plan: Implementation plans, which tier off of programmatic plans (like the *General Management Plan*) and focus on how to implement an activity or project needed to achieve a long-term goal. Implementation plans may direct specific projects as well as ongoing management activities or programs. They provide a more extensive level of detail and analysis than do general management plans. Implementation plans are required to undergo NEPA review.

Implementation project: Implementation projects are specific actions identified in an implementation plan

Indicators: Indicators under the Visitor Experience and Resource Protection framework are specific and measurable physical, ecological, or social variables that reflect the overall condition of a zone or area caused by visitor use and/or visitor use related impacts. Indicators serve as early warning signs that too much use is occurring, or that the types of use are having an adverse affect on Outstandingly Remarkable Values. Resource indicators measure visitor impacts on the biological, physical and/or cultural resources of a park; social indicators measure impacts on the visitor experience.

Inlet: Where water enters a culvert or other drainage feature.

Integrated utility corridor: An underground utility corridor that includes a high voltage and communications duct bank as well as a large diameter, high density, polyethylene pipe spare conduit for future use.

Lintel: Stone beams placed at the top of culverts to provide structural strength to a culvert headwall.

Management action: Actions taken by park management to protect river values and return conditions to established standards based upon information gathered by the Visitor Experience & Resource Protection monitoring program.

Mitigation: Activities that will avoid, reduce the severity of, or eliminate an adverse environmental impact.

NPS-Designated Roadside Parking: Roadside parking that the National Park Service has formalized either through pavement, gravel, and/or parking controls (e.g., berms, curbing, barrier stones, and fencing).

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): The federal act that requires the development of an Environmental Impact Statement for federal actions that might have substantial environmental, social, or other impacts.

National Park Service Management Policies: A policy is a guiding principle or procedure that sets the framework and provides direction for management decisions. National Park Service (NPS) policies are guided by and consistent with the Constitution, public laws, Executive proclamations and orders, and regulations and directives from higher authorities. Policies translate these sources of guidance into cohesive directions. Policy direction may be general or specific. It may prescribe the process by which decisions are made, how an action is to be accomplished, or the results are to be achieved. The primary source of National Park Service policy is the publication *Management Policies 2001*. The policies contained therein are applicable Service-wide. They reflect National Park Service management philosophy. Director's Orders supplement and may amend *Management Policies*. Unwritten or informal “policy” and people’s various understandings of National Park Service traditional practices are never relied on as official policy.

National Park Service Organic Act: In 1916, the National Park Service Organic Act established the National Park Service in order to “promote and regulate use of parks...” and defined the purpose of the national parks as “to conserve the scenery and natural and historic objects and wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” This law provides overall guidance for the management of Yosemite National Park.

Natural processes: All processes such as hydrologic, geologic and ecosystemic, that are not the result of human manipulation.

No Action Alternative: The alternative in a plan that proposes to continue current management direction. “No action” means the proposed activity would not take place, and the environmental effects resulting from taking no action would be compared with the effects of permitting the proposed activity or an alternative activity to go forward.

Nonmotorized watercraft: A class of boats that includes rafts, kayaks, inner tubes, and inflatable air mattresses.

Non-native species: Species of plants or wildlife that are not native to a particular area and often interfere with natural biological systems.

Ordinary high water: The area along the river corridor that would receive floodwaters during an ordinary precipitation year (based on a 2.33-year flood). A 2.33-year flood event has the probability of occurring roughly 50 percent of the time during any given year.

Outlet: Where water exits a culvert or other drainage feature.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs): Those resources in the corridor of a Wild and Scenic River that are of special value and warrant protection. ORVs are the “scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values...that shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations” (16 USC 1272).

Paved apron: A 4-foot wide paved swath which makes the transition from the paved roadway to an unpaved turnout.

Permeable subgrade: A free draining layer of open-graded (of similar size) aggregate with high permeability, wrapped with a geotextile fabric, and placed between the base material of a roadbed and the native soils, designed to rapidly remove free water from most elements of pavement and.

Planning: An interdisciplinary process for developing short-term and long-term goals for visitor experience, resource conditions, and facility placement.

Preferred Alternative: The preferred alternative is the alternative within the range of alternatives presented in an environmental assessment that the agency believes would best fulfill the purpose and need of the proposed action. While the preferred alternative is a different concept from the environmentally preferable alternative, they may also be one and the same for some environmental assessments.

Programmatic plan: Programmatic plans establish broad management direction for Yosemite National Park. The 1980 *General Management Plan* is a programmatic plan with a purpose to set a “clearly defined direction for resource preservation and visitor use” and provide general directions and policies to guide planning and management in the park. The 2005 *Revised Merced River Plan* is also a programmatic plan that guides future activities in the Merced River corridor. Programmatic plans are required to undergo NEPA review.

Public comment process: The public comment process is a formalized process required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in which the National Park Service must publish a Notice Of Availability in the *Federal Register* which provides public notice that a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and associated information, including scoping comments and supporting documentation, is available for public review and input pursuant to the Freedom Of Information Act. In addition, the National Park Service must conduct formal public hearings on the Draft EIS when required by statute or the Council on Environmental Quality NEPA Regulations.

Pulverization: See “Asphalt Pulverizing”

Riparian area: The land area and associated vegetation bordering a stream or river.

Riprap: A layer of large, durable fragments of broken rocks specially selected and graded, thrown together irregularly or fitted together to prevent water erosion.

River corridor: The area within the boundaries of a Wild and Scenic River (e.g., the Merced River corridor).

River Protection Overlay: The river and a buffer area adjacent to the river that allows for the protection and restoration of natural and aquatic ecosystem processes.

Riverine: Of or relating to a river. A riverine system includes all wetlands and deepwater habitats contained within a channel, with two exceptions: (1) wetlands dominated by trees, shrubs, persistent emergents, emergent mosses, or lichens, and (2) habitats with water containing ocean-derived salts in excess of 0.5%. A channel is an open conduit either naturally or artificially created which periodically or continuously contains moving water, or which forms a connecting link between two bodies of standing water.

Roadside parking: Locations along the Yosemite Valley Loop Roadway where vehicles have the ability to pull off roadway and are considered to be either “NPS-designated” or “User-designated.” Parking lots in the project area are not considered roadside parking in this environmental assessment.

Section 7 determination process: Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act specifies restrictions on hydro and water resources development projects. Water resources projects are subject to Section 7 of the Wild Scenic Rivers Act (16 USC 1278). Section 7(a) states, “*no department or agency of the United States shall assist by loan, grant, license or otherwise in the construction of any water resources project that would have a direct and adverse effect on the values for which such river was established, as determined by the Secretary charged with its administration.*”

Segment: Section 2 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires that the Merced River be classified and administered as “wild”, “scenic”, or “recreational” river segments, based on the condition of the river corridor at the time of boundary designation. The classification of a river segment indicates the level of development on the shorelines, the level of development in the watershed, and the accessibility by road or trail. “Wild” segments are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds and/or shorelines essentially primitive and unpolluted; “Scenic” segments are free of impoundments, with watersheds and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads; and, “Recreational” segments are readily accessible by road or railroad, may have some development along the shorelines, and may have undergone impoundment or diversion in the past. The Merced River is divided into eight segments.

Segment Limits: Represents the maximum number of users that would be allowed in a segment of the Merced River corridor on any single day during peak visitor periods.

Site hardening: Any development that creates an impervious ground surface. Usually used as a way to direct visitor use and reduce impacts to resources.

Social trails: A social trail is an informal, non-designated trail between two locations. Social trails often result in trampling stresses to sensitive vegetation types.

Standards: Standards are the minimum acceptable conditions established for VERP indicators. They identify when management action should be taken to reduce or reverse visitor-use related impacts. A standard does *not* define an intolerable condition nor is it a condition that managers should strive to achieve, unless intolerable conditions already exist.

Superelevation: The slope or incline of a roadway cross-section that aides in curve negotiation (typically greater than 2%).

Threatened and Endangered Species: Species of plants that receive special protection under state and/or federal laws. Also referred to as “listed species” or “endangered species.”

Traditional cultural resource: Any site, structure, object, landscape, or natural resource feature assigned traditional, legendary, religious, subsistence, or other significance in the cultural system of a group traditionally associated with it.

Traditional cultural properties: Traditional cultural resources that are eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places as historic properties

Treatment: Work carried out to achieve a historic preservation goal. The four primary treatments are Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction (as stated in Secretary of Interior’s *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*).

User capacity: As it applies to parks, user capacity is the type and level of use that can be accommodated while sustaining the desired resource and social conditions based on the purpose and objectives of a park unit.

User-designated roadside parking: Roadside parking that has been established over time through visitor use; these locations are not necessarily encouraged or discouraged by the National Park Service. These locations are not considered to be “formalized” through the use of pavement, gravel and/or parking controls.

Visitor experience: The perceptions, feelings, and reactions a park visitor has in relationship with the surrounding environment.

Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP): A user capacity method developed for the National Park Service to measure and manage the impacts of use on the visitor experience and the resource conditions in national parks. VERP is an ongoing, iterative system that measures the type and level of visitor use that can be accommodated while sustaining the desired resource and social conditions that complement the purposes of the park units and their management objectives. The VERP framework contains nine elements, four of which are key to developing a user capacity program. The VERP user capacity model establishes (1) a management zoning designation, (2) indicators or measurable variables that reflect the overall condition of a zone, (3) standards that set the basis for judging whether or not conditions are being met, and (4) management actions that must be take if monitoring reveals that conditions are not within standard.

Visitor use: Refers to the types of recreation activities visitors participate in, numbers of people in an area, their behavior, the timing of use, and distribution of use within a given area.

Wetland: Wetlands are defined by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (CFR, Section 328.3[b], 1986) as those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions.

Wild and Scenic River: A river receiving special protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Wingwalls: Extended walls constructed at an oblique angle at the ends of a culvert. Wing walls help protect culvert headwalls, and channel water efficiently through inlets and outlets.

Acronyms

AIRFA	American Indian Religious Freedom Act
ARPA	Archaeological Resources Protection Act
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP	Best Management Practice
CDFG	California Department of Fish and Game
CDMG	California Department of Mines and Geology
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
cfs	Cubic feet per second
CNDDDB	California Natural Diversity Database
CTTCA	California Technology, Trade and Commerce Agency
USCOE/Corps	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
CPI	Consumer Price Index
dB	Decibels
dBA	Decibels on the “A” weighted scale
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FONSI	Finding Of No Significant Impact
GMP	General Management Plan
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NHRP	National Register of Historic Places
NO_x	Nitrogen Oxide
NPS	National Park Service
NRI	National Rivers Inventory
NTU	Nephelometric Turbidity Unit
NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
ORVs	Outstandingly Remarkable Values
PM₁₀	Particulate matter
RPO	River Protection Overlay
RWQCB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
SCADA	Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition System
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
USDOI	United States Department of the Interior
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
USFS	United States Forest Service
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey
VERP	Visitor Experience and Resource Protection
VOC	Volatile Organic Compound
YARTS	Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System

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